

## "A Red Letter Week"

To say Les Vaux is peaceful is an understatement. If I saw more than one car a day, I'm probably over-estimating the rush hour! The mature trees, the owls hooting quietly during the night, the fabulous clear view of the stars, you could literally hear a pin drop! All this made for a really relaxing time. What could be better than a rural location away from the city life I endure the rest of the year? A cracking good week fishing hopefully!

Before I started setting up I checked with Chas as to what was happening recently on the lake. It being mid May and the water temperature just starting to creep up slowly, he said it had been fishing ok. Visitors were catching, although nothing too big had been out for about two weeks, but he had spotted 3-4 forty plus fish breaking surface in the deeper water at the dam end about 4 metres off the bank. Could those fish be feeding on the residual bait from the last anglers on the lake? Well, I sort of decided that it may be best to use single hook bait, a little baggie, for the time being.

I did, sort of, know what to expect; this was my 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Vaux and having been delighted with the facilities in the gite and on the bank I was ready to start my campaign. Getting to fish more than the 24 -48hr stint at home was inviting enough, so to have a whole week was my idea of a holiday. Yes - I knew I would be on the bank 24/7, apart from doing the cooking for my mate and I in the gite.

Bivvy up, rods out, sit back and relax and wait for the alarms to spring into action. Can't say I'm the best company when the rods go out at first, as I'm always keen, like most anglers, to get the "blank" out of the way. Having waited up to 36 hours in the past at Vaux it was just 4 hours after setting up. At 5pm on the Saturday, the alarm started to twitch. Wait for it, I thought, hovering over the rod, could I get lucky this early? Then bam, off it went. I was fishing the dam wall and the fish tracked away from the dam wall towards the top of the lake, but I managed to gently stop its progress towards my other lines. Good, now the retrieve. Still delighted with this early take, lets carefully get it on the bank.

"Bloody hell you in already" my mate cried out. Usually he gets first honours at Vaux. Picking up my landing net my mate said all the usual things, "have you seen it yet?", "what's it feel like?" Well, I thought, it steamed off at first, but it had turned into a bit of a plodder. Could it be a nice fish? One thing I do know at Vaux, the smaller 20lb commons absolutely go mental and fight like mad. So, this plodder may be a good one. Taking things very gently, as this was my bonus 4<sup>th</sup> rod, a 9ft Fox stalker rod, slowly I eased it back and about 10 metres out I got a quick glance at the fish. "Looks like a mirror", my mate mused. Hello, it's found it's second life now it was near the bank and it charged off. But slowly I made up the lost line and got it in the net. "Looks good" said my friend and it was. I leant over the bank and undid the link, rolled it up in the net and carried it into the carp cradle. I sent my mate charging into the bivvy to unpack the camera and get the scales out for the weigh-in.

48lb 6oz what a result! I had only been fishing a short while and this was my best start ever. After carefully returning the fish, dinner time was the order of the day. Then I set my rods for the night, tidied the bivvy up, had another look at the photos. It had been a long trip over, so in no time at all I was inspecting the inside of my eyelids.

I think we all try and set a target when we fish. I hadn't broken my PB in France, but at Vaux, I like to think a fish a day would be a sensible aim. Particularly as I was fishing 24/7, but it was still early season - was I being realistic? Well, time will tell. Pulled out of my slumber at 11.30pm on the Saturday, the rods went off again, this time a rod tight to far bank. This carp was bouncing the rod tip about a lot, not so big this time. A 24lb mirror - still, a good end to the first day.

Sunday night brought 2 more carp, a 28lb 6oz common at 1.30 am and a 28lb mirror at 7am. What a start to the week! Up on my imaginary target already. Inevitably conditions changed. Lake activity seem to slow down and my friend further down on the platform bank was starting to catch. Monday and Tuesday went by for me with no action. Half the week gone! Time to change tactics. It was getting warmer and brighter and I had spotted carp near the surface on several occasions. Maybe try a zig rig or a wafter bottom bait?

Wednesday I picked up a 22lb8oz common at 5.45 am, dreary eyed, but gratefully accepted on a snowman set up. The rest of the day was uneventful. Hope this wasn't the shape of things to come as the early part of the week was excellent. So I climbed into my bed chair Wednesday evening after spending all that evening discussing tactics, rigs, locations with my mate - you know, all the things that are important to us carp anglers.

The sound of my alarms shortly after nodding off at 1.15am on Thursday morning got me up and after a short trip into the landing net a 14lb common was the result. I'm going from the sublime to the ridiculous here! Recasting my rod it was time to get some sleep, but an hour later at 2.15am another rod zipped off. Good, maybe they started a feeding spell? This fish was a 30lb mirror. That's better! Back on track! Hang about, that's 7 carp, target achieved! Happy thoughts as I slipped back into the land of nod.

With that little, personal milestone achieved, in my mind anything for rest of the week is a plus was the way I was going to treat it. I can snore for England when I'm on the bank and at 7am my mate had wandered down with a brew to check out my overnight action. After telling him to clear off as I wanted to sleep in for a while, exactly at that point my rod alarm slowly started to play its tune, then it just ripped off. Leaping out of my bivvy, it was on! Time to play it into the bank. Hello, I thought, another dead weight plodder. Could it be another belter? Best take it nice and easy I'm thinking. Armed with the landing net, my mate netted the fish and I sighed with relief as this was a good-looking catch. As usual with bigger fish, I removed the hook link from the line, rolled up the landing net and put it in the cradle. "Reckon that's up there with that one you had at the start of the week" was the comment from my mate as we zeroed and prepped the scales and weigh sling. "I'm giving you 52lb for that one" he chirped. "What?" I said "that's a new PB for me". After taking photos and releasing the mirror back into the lake my smile just got bigger and bigger. A punch in the air and time for a celebratory cup of tea and breakfast.

Shortly after the big one, I had number 9, a 17lb 8oz common at 8.45am. This had been a red letter day for sure, I reflected. One more on the Friday, a 20lb 8oz common, and another common at 17lb as I packed up on Saturday morning at 5am.

For me this had been a cracking week at Vaux, 11 carp and a new 52lb PB. My friend had been picking up carp every day as well during the week and surprisingly ended up with 7 carp all weighing between 30 to 37lb! Time for home now. It really was a very memorable holiday and a red letter week for me.



The 48lb 6oz mirror within 4 hours of setting up with a 9ft stalking rod! on a yellow pop-up



The New pb 52lb mirror, what a fish! Magic! 12ft rod on a simple snowman arrangement